

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEA-09 AEC-05 AID-05 CEA-01

CIAE-00 CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FPC-01 H-01

INR-07 INT-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-03 RSC-01

SAM-01 OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-01 TRSE-00 FRB-01 FEA-01

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R 171930Z JAN 75

FM AMCONSUL CURACAO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2114

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, ECON, PFOR, VE, NA

SUBJECT: SPECULATION ON VENEZUELAN BID TO PURCHASE SHELL AND
EXXON REFINERIES IN THE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES

WITHIN THE PAST WEEK THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE NEWSPAPER
SPECULATION THAT VENEZUELA WAS MAKING A SERIOUS BID TO PURCHASE
AT LEAST PART OWNERSHIP OF BOTH SHELL REFINERY ON CURACAO
AND EXXON ON ARUBA. THIS SPECULATION WAS APPARENTLY CONFIRMED
BY A STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF SHELL OF VENEZUELA OF INTEREST
IN PURCHASING PART OWNERSHIP IN THE SHELL REFINERY ON CURACAO.
NETHERLANDS ANTILLES PRIME MINISTER JUANCHO EVERTSZ HAS BEEN
QUOTED AS SAYING THAT HE HAS CONFIRMED RUMORS THAT
QTE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE BEGUN BETWEEN SHELL CURACAO AND VENEZUELA
UNQTE.

LAST NIGHT I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO QUERY BOTH THE PRESIDENT
OF EXXON ARUBA AND A HIGH OFFICIAL IN SHELL CURACAO
ON THIS MATTER. THE PRESIDENT OF EXXON STATED THAT HE HAD NOT
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BEEN APPROACHED BY VENEZUELA WHATSOEVER. THIS DID NOT PRECLUDE

THAT VENEZUELA HAD APPROACHED EXXON CORPORATION BUT IF THEY HAD THE MATTER HAD NOT YET BEEN BROUGHT TO HIS ATTENTION. HE ADDED THAT TO HIS KNOWLEDGE EXXON ARUBA HAD NO INTEREST WHATSOEVER IN SELLING THE REFINERY IN WHOLE OR IN PART. HE FURTHER STATED THAT THE PRESS STATEMENTS OF THE PRESIDENT OF SHELL OF VENEZUELA COULD NOT BE OVERLOOKED AND THERE MAY BE INTEREST BY SHELL OF VENEZUELA IN PURCHASING INTO EXXON ARUBA. HE REPEATED HEIKNEW OF NO INTEREST WHATEVER IN SELLING EXXON ARUBA.

A RANKING CORPORATE OFFICIAL FROM SHELL CURACAO STATED TO ME THAT VENEZUELA HAD APPROACHED THE DIRECTORSHIP OF SHELL IN HOLLAND CONCERNING THE PURCHASE OF A PART OF THE REFINERY ON CURACAO. HE STATED THAT SHELL IN HOLLAND HAD TURNED DOWN THE OFFER AND ONE OF THEIR STRONGEST REASONS WAS THE POLITICAL IMPACT THE SALE OF THIS REFINERY MIGHT HAVE ON THE NA. HE ADDED THAT HE COULD NOT FORESEE ANY SALE OF THE SHELL REFINERY TO VENEZUELAN INTERESTS WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

COMMENT: THE NEWS STORIES CONCERNING OFFERS FOR PURCHASE OF THE REFINERIES HAVE CAUSED MUCH SPECULATION IN THE NA AS TO THE POLITICAL INTENT OF VENEZUELA AND WHAT EFFECT BUYING INTO THE REFINERIES WOULD HAVE ON THE LONG RANGE POLITICAL SCENE. IN A SPEECH AT THE ROTARY CLUB LAST NIGHT PRIME MINISTER EVERTSZ STATED THAT THE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES NEEDED INVESTMENT FROM THE OUTSIDE AND IT WELCOMED SOUND INVESTMENT PROGRAMS IN THE NA FROM VENEZUELA AS WELL AS ANY OTHER OF ITS CARIBBEAN NEIGHBORS, BUT THAT THE NA POLITICAL COURSE IN THE FUTURE WOULD BE TO MAINTAIN ITS CULTURAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TIES WITH HOLLAND. HE AGAIN STATED HIS POLITION THAT HE COULD NOT SEE INDEPENDENCE AS ADVANTAGEIOUS TO THE NA, BUT PERHAPS SOME LONG RANGE CHANGES IN STATUS WOULD HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT TO SATISFY POLITICAL MOODS IN HOLLAND.

AS CONCERNS THE DECISION OF SHELL MANAGEMENT IN HOLLAND NOT TO SELL A PART OF SHELL CURACAO TO VENEZUELA, IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT THE ROYAL FAMILY OF HOLLAND OWNS CONSIDERABLE SHARES IN SHELL. IT IS PRESUMED THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF ANY SALE WAS CLOSELY ASSESSED BY THE GON.
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